

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH



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**DC AGENCIES UNITE TO MENTOR WARDS 1 AND 7 YOUTH IN
PASSPORT TO WORK SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM**

(Washington, D.C.) About two dozen Ward 1 and Ward 7 youth are receiving special attention from DC government agencies to enrich their work experience gained through the Passport to Work Summer Youth Employment Program. The mentoring program, piloted last year in Ward 1 to address increasing violence among youth, provides alternatives to destructive behavior to better prepare them to be productive adults and increase their sense of community. In Ward 1, 12 young people, ages 14-16, are participants; and 11 youth, ages 14-15, are working in Ward 7.

“Today’s headlines tell the story. Our young people are in trouble,” said Department of Mental Health Director Martha B. Knisley. “The DMH mentoring program teams are our School Mental Health Program counselors who spent much of the school year helping students handle the effects of violence – whether they were the victims, perpetrators or observers.

“Earlier this year, the SMHP conducted a grief and loss conference, and it is involved in developing the D.C. Children’s Grief and Loss Network. We are helping them become resilient so they can achieve their goals. The reward is seeing a young person’s growth. In fact, a young person from last year’s program now is ‘supervising’ others.”

The Passport to Work Summer Youth Employment Program is sponsored by Mayor Anthony A. Williams and the Department of Employment Services. It runs from July 12 through August 13, 2004. The participating agencies are Neighborhood Services, the Metropolitan Police Department, Emergency Management Agency and the Departments of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Housing and Community Development, Transportation, Public Works, and Health.

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2004 SUMMER MENTORING PROGRAM

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“The students are motivated by the program’s innovative elements,” explained Director Knisley. They are working directly with representatives from the Neighborhood Services Core Teams. Three days a week they accompany a core team representative to observe that employee's tasks and responsibilities. The students participate in Neighborhood Service Core Team meetings and special “junior” core team meetings with Neighborhood Services staff. They also meet the directors of the participating DC government agencies and hear about their experiences. The junior core team emulates the team building, strategic thinking and cooperative, holistic approach to problem solving that characterizes how Neighborhood Services works. Fridays are for field trips related to public administration.

Among the skills to be developed during the program are anger management, money management, communication and life planning.

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